

LESSONS LEARNED IN OCCURRENCE REPORTING

A well-written occurrence report can help avoid an accident and even save a life. Collected below are some lessons learned in occurrence report writing compiled by analysts and site lessons learned coordinators who daily read, analyze, and share lessons learned from these reports.

1. Make sure that occurrence investigators and report writers are communicating. Report writers can only write what they know.
2. Make sure that the Occurrence Report Title matches the event, and try to include a "keyword" for better data base searches.
3. Ensure all coded and text fields agree. For example, in a Roll-Up Report, the number of occurrences specified in the Number of Occurrences field must be the same as the number of occurrences described in the Description of Occurrence.
4. Identify the appropriate Activity Category. Frequently "Normal Operations" is listed when other codes are more appropriate.
5. Include **ALL** applicable Nature of Occurrence criteria (i.e., up to a limit of three). Many reports only include one criteria, when additional ones are obvious.
6. Always begin the Description of Occurrence with a brief summary sentence or two that contains what happened, how the occurrence was identified, what barriers failed, and what the ramifications of the event were.
7. Define the occurrence clearly, even in the Notification Report. This is the "rapid dissemination" feature of occurrence reporting. Frequently the Notification Report triggers follow-up or analysis at another site or Headquarters.
8. Avoid site-specific jargon and acronyms. If they must be used, define or spell them out the first time.
9. Use clear, not obscuring, words to describe an occurrence. For example, state the number of "deaths" versus "there were no survivors"; use the word "fire" versus "incendiary incident."
10. Summarize the event clearly, providing just enough detail so that other sites and analysts won't have to call you to find out what really happened, but not lengthy "log entry" passages.
11. Provide specifics that will help readers evaluate its applicability to their circumstances. For example, equipment failures should include the equipment manufacturer, model, and age.
12. Quantify appropriate items. For example, reports involving spills, leaks, or flow rates should include quantities, such as drops per second, gallons of liquid or cubic feet of gas per minute, total amount spilled.
13. Standardize the units in the reports. For example, contamination readings are sometimes reported as counts per second (cps), and sometimes as dpm/100cm². The preferred unit is dpm/100cm², but if cps is reported, the efficiency factor needs to be included.

14. When discussing chemical reaction, release or exposure events, include the names of chemicals, both reactants and by-products.
15. When discussing actions of personnel, include their function, such as maintenance technician, on-shift operator, or outside contractor. Describe any work control documents in use, such as reader-worker procedure, maintenance package with step sign-offs, written standard operating procedure, or none.
16. Be specific when reporting corrective actions. For example, instead of "revised procedure," say "reordered steps," "added steps," or other appropriate entry.

For additional information on occurrence report writing, check out DOE Order 232.1A, *Occurrence Reporting and Processing of Operations Information*, and its associated Manual, or the *Occurrence Reporting Program Guidance Document*, which is available on the Internet at [**http://tis.eh.doe.gov/web/oeaf/orps/report_quality/report_quality.html**](http://tis.eh.doe.gov/web/oeaf/orps/report_quality/report_quality.html).

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